

for financial or emotional reasons, beyond the age of 65. By requiring America's seniors who earn more than \$34,000 as individuals, or \$44,000 as couples, to pay income taxes on 85 percent of their Social Security benefits, the 1993 Clinton tax hike on Social Security benefits placed a heavier economic burden on millions of middle- and low-income senior citizens.

The bill repeals the Clinton tax hike in a 5-year period. By the year 2000 the percentage of the tax on Social Security benefits will be lowered to 50 percent. This was the amount originally in effect before the 1993 tax increase. H.R. 1215 is designed to grant tax fairness for millions of American families and, more importantly, for those who have made this country what it is today, our elders.

By increasing the earnings limit seniors can receive, and eliminating the 1993 tax hikes to which they are exposed to, this legislation will serve to lift the financial burden of our older Americans and will grant them a feeling of usefulness and contribution as the continue to produce in the workplace.

WHAT ARE OUR PRIORITIES AS A SOCIETY?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kentucky [Mr. WARD] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WARD. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to join my Democratic colleagues today in speaking out against the proposed cuts in student loans offered under the Republicans' rescission package. Now let me hasten to point out that I am not saying, as you may have heard some Members of the other party say today, that Democrats just want to tax more. It is not a question of taxing more, it is a question of what is going to be cut? It is a question of what are our priorities as a society?

As we have seen in these rescission programs, the priorities that have been reflected in the cuts that have been made are not the priorities that I was elected to Congress to talk about or to promote.

I want to mention one thing that is particularly of concern to me today. This concerns this body, that as a body we should have a rule, as we did in the State of Kentucky where I served in the Legislature, that any conference committee change of a bill has to be explained on the floor of this House.

What we have seen, ladies and gentlemen and Mr. Speaker, is a change in a very simple bill, a simple bill that was passed by a wide margin in the House and in the other body, but with little differences. Those differences were worked out in a conference report. That conference report had the power to add things that were never discussed in either the House or the other body. But with that power what they did in this case was to add one tax break for one very rich individual named Rupert

Murdoch. This tax break, one of 17 that were proposed, relating to the Federal Communications consideration of purchases of minority enterprises, sales to minority enterprises, a tax break that will mean tens of millions of dollars in money directly to that corporate empire, which was not told to us on the floor of this House when it was brought up.

As I say, in the State of Kentucky, there is a specific rule, a requirement that a change of that nature has to be raised on the floor. Had it been raised, Mr. Speaker, there would have been cries of foul from one side of this floor to the other. Had it been raised the bill would have been changed on the floor or defeated and sent back to be changed before it was brought back before us.

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So today I have urged the President to veto that bill, veto that bill because, while it does offer an important tax break to small business people who buy their own health insurance, that is something we can do in an hour and a half after the veto.

Ms. MCKINNEY. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

I am so glad that the gentleman is talking about this.

Now I have got a newspaper article here from the New York Daily News where Mr. GINGRICH says, "I'm against affirmative action for rich people," and he was urging the repeal of this tax break.

Now I am also further reading here that the exception cleared by the House leaders was so tightly crafted that, by rearranging the dates in the legislation, it hands the break only to Murdoch.

I ask, "Can you believe that we were duped just like that?"

Mr. WARD. I appreciate the gentleman from Georgia making that point because what it shows is that it is business as usual.

I am a freshman Member; the gentleman from Georgia is a sophomore Member. We were sent here to do things differently that work. We were sent here to change things.

Ms. MCKINNEY. We absolutely were.

Mr. WARD. I yield again.

Ms. MCKINNEY. We were sent here to change things, but, as it stands, nothing is being changed. These people are going too far, the Gingrich revolution has gone too far in the special interests category, benefiting one person, and I cannot believe that we began this hundred days with a discussion about NEWT GINGRICH and Rupert Murdoch with their arms entwined, and now here we are ending this hundred days. What? With the same discussion, about the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. GINGRICH] and Mr. Murdoch with their arms entwined again.

Mr. WARD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman, and the point I want to make is, "If you're going to give up this kind of revenue to the Federal

Government, what are you going to cut to make up for that revenue," and that is what we have seen, especially in the student loan program.

H.R. 1215 WILL RESULT IN A BALANCED BUDGET BY 2002

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BILBRAY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. MARTINI] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MARTINI. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that when H.R. 1215 comes to the floor, the tax relief bill this week, it will now contain language that clearly states that the tax cut provisions in the bill can only become law as part of legislation that will result in a balanced budget by the year 2002. This provision certainly strengthens the bill and clarifies and reinforces our party's commitment to balancing the budget as well as providing tax relief to the American people. I intend to support the rule and H.R. 1215 and urge the support of all of the Members of the House.

As a freshman this year, this past fall I also ran on a platform committed to reducing the deficit, reducing the size of the Federal Government and, ultimately, balancing the budget, and I think that point of view was shared by the majority of the Members of this House.

Looking at the bill, H.R. 1215, in anticipation of this upcoming vote this week, as originally reported from the committee, it did not contain, in my opinion and in the opinion of several others who have worked very hard in the past week to bring this language to the bill, my colleagues, the gentleman from Delaware [Mr. CASTLE] and the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. UPTON]. In reviewing that bill it would appear to us it did not contain the type of safeguards that deficit reduction would not take place to passage at the cost of the promised tax cuts.

As a freshman going through one rescission bill in the past, a month here as a Member of the House, I quickly began to realize that, faced with the tough decisions, how difficult it is to bring a majority to reducing the size of government, to making government more cost effective and to bringing about the deficits that we so direly need to balance the budget.

We certainly have a responsibility to the American people to take the additional step of tying the tax cuts directly to the passage of budget reconciliation legislation that will balance the budget by the year 2002.

I am pleased to say, as well, our leadership has agreed this requirement in this language should be included in the tax bill that we will be voting on this week. I would like to take a moment just to briefly explain what the three provisions of this language are.

First and foremost, it assures us that there will not be any implementation of a tax package that we vote on this